problems and make decisions. When they got too big they could not get

local people to take that part of the leadership. We found that in order to

on a regular or permanent basis. That

that goes beyond the individual farm.

it is going to increase in terms of the specific needs--perhaps not so much in quantity as in quality and selectivity.

HELMS: What have been the most difficult erosion problem areas? This answer can include your whole career.

WILLIAMS: Speaking first about the continental United States, I would say the high plains country with its peculiarities of climatic cycles and tendency for wind erosion is still a critical problem area from a standpoint of erosion control. It happens to be because of wind and the

Now I would like to speak a moment about some of the international situations. As you know, while I was administrator, I became an international consultant to a good many governments around the world in setting up conservation programs and organizations patterned somewhat after the concept that we had developed here in the United States. It happens that India was one of the problem countries that I spent more time in than others. But I spent time in other Asian countries as well as some in South America, Central America, and so on. With some two-thirds of the world population facing

the fundamentals of tying conservation practices into land use, the fundamentals of how to do the job, and the use of vegetation and engineering. An awful lot of this has had to come from the United States. In recent years the Canadian government and the governments of Australia and New Zealand have been helpful. Holland has been helpful. Those countries have competence and the technicians that are available to do that kind of work, too.

The conservation problems that we have here in the United States are not

be done. I have seen it done. I know it will work. I participated in it in many of the countries of the world. I know it is possible to do, not exactly on our pattern, but the fundamental principles are the same as far as what you do and how you do it. The good Lord made the soils all over the world not just in the United States, and the climatic factors that influence erosion control and land use work around the world as well as they do here.

HELMS: What do you consider to be your major accomplishments during your career with the Soil Conservation

[redacted]

certain point and then something would happen. The war would break out. The price of wheat would go up and the farmers would go out and plow up the land again. You had to back up and start over again in a way. But we never went clear back to where we were before. We had a better starting point so that we were able to get ahead. I do not know how others would judge that question that you asked me, but that is the way I look at it.

Kenneth E. Grant

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Biographical Sketch

Kenneth E. Grant was born in New Hampshire in March of 1920. After receiving a B.S. in agronomy from the University of New Hampshire and serving for four years with the United States Army Air Corps, he joined SCS in 1946.

He advanced rapidly from soil scientist to deputy state conservationist by 1956. From 1959 to 1964 Grant was state conservationist for New Hampshire. In 1964 [illegible]

Science and Technology that led to the *Report to the President on Control of Agriculture-Related Pollution.* He also carried out two assignments as advisor on erosion control in Pakistan and one assignment on soil and water management in India.

In 1971, the University of New Hampshire awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Science. He has received the Distinguished Service Award from USDA, which recognized his contributions in many areas including his response to growing public concern over the environment

July 29, 1988

HELMS: This is July 29, 1988, and we're in Durham, New Hampshire. To start off, Mr. Grant, could you tell me where you were born and something about your early education?

GRANT: Doug, I was born not too far from here in Rollinsford, New Hampshire, which is on the Maine-New Hampshire border, in 1920. I moved around quite a lot during my early years but basically lived in the New England area, primarily in the state of New Hampshire. I went to high school in Dover, New Hampshire, and graduated in 1941 from the University of New Hampshire. In education beyond that, I became a graduate student in the Agronomy Department, but World War II came along and interrupted that for four years.

HELMS: Do you recall anything from your college years about the soil conservation movement? Were there things you observed in the countryside?

GRANT: I have observed in this state in particular a very, very pronounced transformation of the landscape. New Hampshire way back in the 1850s was a highly agricultural state. And practically every county in the state, of which there are ten, was cleared except in the very northern part of the state. The peak of agriculture was around 1850. From that point on people went west, and agriculture went through a decline. Many counties that were at one time 75 percent cleared are now back to 80 to 85 percent woods. So I've seen some of this transition from the 1920s on. For example, I'd walked four miles from my home to Dover, where I went to high school and I was among dairy farms all the way. Today you could walk that same area and there's about two operating farms. There's been a great change in the agricultural picture. I worked on farms all through my early days. Today of course little of that exists. I'm aware of and can remember the discussions on radio and in newspapers of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. That was a long way off but nevertheless we were aware of what was going on.

This state has never suffered from a real severe problem of erosion that you had in much of the country because the agriculture was not that intensive and the type of land use was such that most of the land was kept in pasture. People don't realize how much agriculture there was in the state at one time. I've read some of the old histories, where they had cattle drives, and sheep from the central part of this state moved all the way down to the Brighton stock markets near Boston. The background of many of the people that I knew when I went to college was agricultural. Today that has changed.

HELMS: Was there anything in your college curriculum about soil conservation? Had it made an impact?

GRANT: Oh yes. I studied primarily agronomy and agricultural economics. The problems associated with soil erosion were in the text and obviously I was aware of that, not on a firsthand basis but simply from classroom discussion. I was fortunate too in that some of the staff had had some experience in Washington in USDA. I also worked in the soils lab and spent one summer on the mobile soil survey. At that time I had decided to work in the soils field.

HELMS: You were in the military. Then how did you end up coming to work for the Soil Conservation Service?

GRANT: When I came back from the service, I went back to the University as a graduate assistant for a short time. The Soil Conservation Service was really just getting started in the state of New Hampshire. The district law had been passed and Al Collins was the one employee here in the state that represented the Service. I got to know him and so I applied for a job. In fact, I had been on the rolls before I went into the military as a soil scientist. And so I accepted a soil scientist position in Keene, New Hampshire, in March of 1946.

I only stayed a soil scientist for a relatively short period of time because I found out that my real interest was more in terms of working with farmers on their land than it was in mapping. And so after about six or eight months, I switched over to soil conservationist and became the work unit conservationist in Keene. I stayed there for, I suppose, about two years, when Al Collins asked me if I would move up to Grafton County, which was a much larger county and larger workload. And I did. I stayed there for another year or so. At that time, there were three district conservationists in New Hampshire who had three or four counties under them, and I became a district conservationist for the three northern counties in the state.

HELMS: In those capacities, were you working mainly with the farmers? What were the main programs to be pushed and the objectives to be accomplished?

GRANT: Most of the land, particularly in Cheshire County and Grafton County, and in the northern part of the state that was being actively farmed was in dairy farms. Now, there were some potato farms. At that time, Coos County, the northernmost county, actually was called Little Aroostook. Aroostook County was a very large potato area in Maine. On some of those farms we had a fairly intensive erosion control program in which we were involved in diversions and terraces and so on. But that type of agriculture didn't really persist very long and so basically we were working with dairy farms. There

were exceptions. There has always been in some of the counties considerable acreage in apples. There

HELMS: You didn't have lots of money to spend on that sort of thing either, is that correct?

had people trained in forestry and some of our district conservationists were foresters, the relationship had to be, of necessity, one of working together with the Extension Service and the state forester. In situations

was a fairly cumbersome way of operating at the start. Districts were then fairly well accepted, once there was a better understanding of what the real mission of the Service and the role of the district supervisors were

HELMS: That's interesting. You're saying that the initial opposition to the district law was not so much by established farm organizations as

how each agency would proceed. I believe we eventually developed a very good understanding and working relationship.

agriculture your rotations were long and corn was on the field for a year or two and then it was in grass for long periods of time. So the emphasis was not on that particular aspect of the program.

HELMS: You were district conservationist. How long did you stay in that position?

GRANT: I was a district conservationist. We've changed titles at times between district conservationists and work unit conservationists. But I was in charge of a county program in 1946 in Cheshire County and then in Grafton County. Then I was the district conservationist responsible for the three northern counties for about three years. In those days, the district conservationist, the state engineer, and other specialists. It was an organizational pattern that was set up in such a way that a lot of conflict was possible between the area conservationist and the state office. Al Collins recognized that fairly quickly and I moved from the area conservationist position as it was abolished to the state staff soil conservationist position. This was after the reorganization of the regional offices.

HELMS: From what you could see from your vantage point and from what you saw after that point, how did you view the regional office structure as compared to the structure we ended up with--the state offices?

GRANT: That was a period of

would probably take a diametrically opposing view and say that the regional office was a very good organizational structure. But I think the time had come to move to the state level. I'm a strong supporter and always have been of the idea that the ties from Washington to the states, with support from technical service units, make for a much stronger organization than when we had the regional offices. Most conservation programs, while you have regional differences, really ought to be national programs. And I think it became far more a national program when we went to the structure of the

GRANT: In this state you have to recognize that you are not dealing with a program that could be picked up and placed in Iowa, Texas, the Midwest, or anyplace else. We didn't have the serious erosion problems that you had elsewhere. We didn't have problems with wind erosion. We didn't have snow survey programs. We didn't have many of the programs but, at that time, the Service was moving pretty aggressively into the water management field. Public Law 566 came along while I was state conservationist here, and we found several places in the state where 566 programs did fit and could be

lack of areas where you could build flood control for agricultural areas

not project a program that wasn't designed for the kind of land use that

opportunity to go back to school. There were many reasons for that, but I suppose basically, it's that most of us in the early days of the Service were primarily trained as scientists. As you moved into a soil conservationist

structures in them. Many were multipurpose structures. There was outstanding cooperation in the state of Indiana between the districts and the local organizations. The three years I spent there were three of the finest I

state conservationists after that and brought experience from different sections of the country which was quite helpful to me. We had one assistant from the state of Texas. We

as a problem, I think we were making very good progress at it. Some parts of the southwestern part of the state were really models of conservation on the land. They had [illegible]

the program and I can't say enough for the state agencies as well. The director of natural resources at that time, John Mitchell, was a close ally and supporter of conservation. I never worked with anybody in the states

HELMS: You mentioned a strong watershed program, were any of the controversies that came up later present in the Indiana operation? I'm referring to objections by the environmental groups.

time in Indiana. I was the Service representative and the USDA representative in the Ohio River Basin and Wabash River Basin. Now that actually covered Indiana and parts of Illinois. The Wabash River Basin had

GRANT: I think it did for the simple reason that the same people who had to be involved at the local level had also been involved at the larger programmatic level. For example,

GRANT: As I recall, the first year nationwide the number of projects approved was ten. Lincoln Hills was one of them. We appointed an RC&D coordinator and a staff who were resident in the area. We had a person on the state staff assigned leadership for working with them. But the bulk of the responsibility in developing a new program like that, as I view it even now, was really a job of working with local people who recognized that they had certain kinds of problems or opportunities and had demonstrated a willingness to go ahead and put in some effort into coming up with a solution. They were far ranging. Some of the problems involved an acceleration of the conservation effort in an area. Others involved water management that was necessary to protect a small community. We got into such things as economic stimulus by helping establish a sawmill. The project covered a whole myriad of opportunities for economic development in that area with some money coming from RC&D funds. But the necessity of providing land easements, rights-of-way, operation and maintenance, and some matching funds was at the local level. The project coordinator was one of the key people. He had to move into areas in which the Service had not worked before, and in many cases hadn't had a lot of experience. He had to be one who was able to motivate the people who recognized the local problems with a willingness to expend their own time and effort because these people were non-paid people. They put in an enormous amount of time working on things for the local community good. I didn't stay with that particular project long enough to see it brought to fruition. I saw examples of RC&D all over the country. Practically every state that I visited had RC&D projects and they covered a tremendous number of diverse problems that people were working on--some cultural, some economic, and some physical.

HELMS: You went from the job as the state conservationist in Indiana to the associate administrator. Could you tell us when that happened, and how you were selected for the job?

GRANT: It happened in 1967, after I had been in Indiana for three years. The selection for all of these positions at that time was part of the career system. I was asked by the administrator if I would be a candidate for that particular job. And while I'll admit I was somewhat surprised because of the grade differential, I certainly as a career employee was interested in being considered if that was his wish. I also knew that several others were also considered--as it should be in the selection of anyone for that job. There should be multiple candidates. Sometime after that I was asked to prepare a paper and I'm sure all the others were also, of how I viewed the job of associate administrator and some of the things that, if selected, I would like to accomplish. I wrote and submitted the paper, along with others.

HELMS: You have reason to believe that this process was taken seriously and they actually read the papers?

GRANT: I have absolutely no reason not to believe that this was true. As I look at it, I think it's a perfectly legitimate request to ask of people who want to be considered for that position about some of the things they viewed as part of the job of associate administrator and how they would personally like to attack some o problems that confronted the Service. I have every reason to believe that the papers were probably seriously considered by both the administrator

time is spent on this study." His reply to me was that that study was important enough in his judgment to both our agency and to the whole Department that he was perfectly happy for me to continue to spend as much time as was necessary on the study and so I did. And except for a couple of special assignments that I did for him--one of which was an overseas assignment--that was my principal occupation for the first year.

f the

HELMS: This is interesting because this is only a couple of years before the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed, which had a

of the country that I had not previously worked in. It was a period of

GRANT: I think an organization can be operated successfully in a number of different ways. Strong leadership

range program, in another year I'd go to a state that I was not too familiar with that had very urgent problems that needed to be solved. During the time that I was in that state, I always asked the state conservationist to bring together as many of his field staff as he possibly could, particularly the district conservationists. We did this in one large meeting if the state was reasonably small, or we did it in a series of meetings otherwise. We always did it at breakfast time. I would bring everyone up to date on what I saw for the Service in the year ahead. And then I opened it up to any and all questions. That was the part of the program that I felt was one of the best things that we ever did. Because it provided me with an opportunity to see what people at the working level

we enjoyed the fact that we had a chance to ask any and all questions with no holds barred." I have no idea whether this is being done now or not, but for me it was a linkage from the field all the way through to the Washington office that gave all of us insights that I don't think we ever could have gotten in any other way.

HELMS: You take out several layers through which views of the field staff could be filtered before it reaches you, is that correct?

GRANT: Absolutely true, and the written word frequently is caged in very careful terms, whereas a fellow who stands up after having eaten breakfast with you is apt to be pretty straightforward as to what he says and

to needed to be reviewed to see which ones needed to be continued and which ones needed to be cut back.

beginning to get very much concerned about the loss of prime agricultural land. A lot of studies were done in

people would think about. Not that we don't need the transportation

base of first class agricultural land continues to shrink. So obviously our

We dealt with the fallout of that from a conservation point of view for some time. I know the Service did some studies which appeared in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* on how much land was converted. I'd like for you to give me your recollections of whether this was something of a shock and what the Service tried to do to respond. Some of the land had had old style terraces which were lost, and windbreaks, the whole gamut

adjustments. If land had to be used more intensively, you put more intensive conservation practices on it.

Now, when you reach the point that you begin to break out land that simply was not suitable for agricultural use, and we had some of that during that period, the program gets a lot more complicated. Because even if you can control erosion to an allowable soil loss, it generally is going to cost the farmer considerably

putting it into woods." That's a tough situation when the price is good and somebody wants to do it, but nevertheless, I think that as a professional soil conservationist you have a responsibility of calling the shots as they are. If you're on class four, five, or six land, it's usually going to create a problem for him on a long-term basis, and a problem for his neighbors downstream. You'd better call a spade a spade.

HELMS: Was there any way in the Department you could try to influence them not to be so enthusiastic in their advice to plant more and more land?

GRANT: Well, I think our philosophy in the Service has pretty much been that there are some lands

HELMS: I guess it was Bennett's idea to have a plan for the whole farm and conservation practices for the type of crops you are trying to grow, and it does make a great deal of sense. But the Service always has had the dilemma of when does writing the plan become the objective, as opposed to getting it accomplished on the farm. I noticed at one point you raised this in one of the meetings--that it needed to be studied and looked at. You had worked as a district conservationist. Was that something that the Service had to pay attention to?

GRANT: You have a tendency to always measure progress by certain landmarks. And one of the measures of progress we've always had is the number of conservation plans

follow up and continue to develop that plan until it does meet the objectives of the complete conservation plan. The numbers game is one that needs to be very carefully considered. An important measurement is the total amount of conservation that is applied to the land. If that comes from fifty completed plans and some more that are in a stage which is not yet finalized, why so be it, you are getting conservation on the land. I would have been far more impressed with a district that had ten thousand acres of an essential practice applied than I would have been with twice as many conservation plans and only half as much conservation on the land.

It's difficult to generalize. Some areas of the country, because of long history, topography, and the problems associated with farming that land, are very difficult to handle. One of the areas, for example, that I spent some considerable amount of time in had make the adjustments that are necessary to develop a conservation plan that would adequately control erosion and satisfy his income requirements. In those cases, you are going to have to approach the conservation plan on a very long-term basis, and in some cases, look for unique ways of doing it.

HELMS: You were from an era, the Kennedy-Johnson years, when there was emphasis on rural development, on the rural-urban fringe in using soil surveys, and on the sorts of expertise built up in the Service to help proper development and assistance to communities, small towns, and so on. Then we go into the Nixon-Ford era. Was there a change in the philosophy in the Department or did it continue as it was? What was the attitude in Congress as to where the emphasis of the Service should be?

GRANT: We did have a tremendous

things that can operate on that basis. But to me the strongest point that you can make in analyzing the success of a

assumption that every dollar spent should return more than a dollar back

and programs are frequently

think that some of the rural development programs that we are working with have to fall in that category. It's a building of a spirit and a willingness among people to work together to get something done. Once you pull away the little bit of incentive or maybe the one-man leadership that can really generate enthusiasm with these people, you lose a great deal in the program, even though you can't justify it the way some people would like to see it justified on a dollar and cents basis. This is not to say that cost-benefit analysis doesn't have an important place in determining program priorities. It does. But some important actions do not lend themselves easily to such rigorous examination.

HELMS: Originally, with some of the programs of the 1960s the supporters of the SCS and the National Association of Conservation Districts were concerned about taking resources from more traditional activities. Was that their attitude in the 1970s? What were the priorities of the Department, the Service, and the districts? Were they pretty much on the same wavelength?

your earlier questions. However, I believe more and more it was becoming apparent that soil conservation needs did not stop at the farm or ranch boundary. Erosion problems in developing communities, on highways, on steep land being developed for housing, and in other locations all contributed to the total sediment load. Many local groups and communities recognized the need for soil survey information and technical assistance. A significant development had been taking place for some time and was accelerating rapidly--the willingness of others to share in the costs of soil surveys, technical assistance, and office personnel. We encouraged this activity, as did the districts, and very significant amounts of money were appropriated at the state and local level. The end result was a strengthening of the soil conservation program and the base of support was broadened. All of these actions required many meetings between SCS, districts, and state and local governments. It required explanations for the Department and Congress. But I believe good understanding was generally achieved and we were pretty much all on the

GRANT: I completely agree that it has become more complicated. When I first went to work for the Service, if you could deal with the problems associated with developing a conservation plan on an individual farm or ranch, you could be a very successful district conservationist. You had a great deal of respect, and practically everybody in the community supported exactly what you were doing. In this day and age, it's not that simple.

HELMS: You were referring to the 1970s?

GRANT: I'm referring to the 1970s. We had environmental groups which frequently took a diametrically opposed position to some of the things that we had been doing. We had strong support from district supervisors and from farmers and ranchers for a program that needed agricultural drainage and yet the people who were concerned about the preservation of wetlands took quite a different point of view. Our people, it seems to me, had to learn to become very skillful in dealing with the myriad of groups in order to develop accommodation that would meet as many objectives as you possibly could with the various groups you were working with. There would be no question that a channel might be flooding an area and causing a lot of damage. So it needed to be worked on. The problem arose when you asked, "How do you do it?" Historically, with an engineering bias, I suppose we were inclined to put in beautiful two-to-one side slopes and a fairly straight ditch that would get the water off as quickly as possible. We found we could accommodate and get the water off and instead of putting both sides on two to one slopes we could leave one side in native vegetation, and we had to aesthetically deal with leaving some areas untouched. We had to modify the program to still reach the objectives that were needed, or as many as possible, and also satisfy the legitimate concerns of other people.

In some cases these concerns went, I think, beyond the point of reasonableness. When this was so, our people had to learn how to recognize this and deal with the problem. I received letters as

Congress and protest something. We tried to develop training programs and we tried to discuss with our people how to handle this. I think over a period of time, step by step, we brought competing forces closer and closer together. Nobody was completely satisfied with the final solution, but perhaps most were in agreement that this was the best alternative that could be achieved.

HELMS: I know you started some training courses on the environment, but did you also have ones on how to deal with conflict?

GRANT: I took the environmental course at Georgia that you are referring to. Practically all of the people from the state conservationist level and into the Washington office took this program in order to better understand environmental concerns. But we did stress over and over again with our people in meetings that

for millions of dollars in terms of projects which you think are environmentally sound. It's not easy when a project that had been planned had a price tag of $5 million on it, but after constant delay, modification, further delay, and more modification, was now a $10 million project and may or may not have a favorable cost-benefit ratio. But this was a growing process and it was probably beneficial to the long-term soil and water conservation program. It helped educate and bring into understanding more and more people as we moved down the road. But at the time that the conflicts first existed, it certainly created some problems.

HELMS: Was there opposition within the Service to changing policies on watershed work?

GRANT: Oh, you bet your life! You couldn't possibly have the changes that

ways actually would no longer be as supportive of the program as they should be.

But I have to say that by and large, even the environmental organizations that we had the greatest difficulty with in our watershed program continued to support almost unanimously other aspects of the Service programs. So they were separating out that part of the program that they didn't like and they wanted to change, but they were

HELMS: Now the people in the watershed program tell me they think the amount of drainage that was done with the soil and watershed program has been greatly exaggerated.

GRANT: It has.

HELMS: The other thing that there was objection to was the channelization and how that was done. You say modifications were made. If

[redacted]

drainage and channelization was exaggerated is a very, very good one. I talked with one organization that I won't identify, that simply told me, "Ken, the only way that we can get our total membership concerned enough to try to change what you are doing is to so overstate the case it would get everybody involved in it and willing to write letters." So, that's an admission that you get people upset when you create a major controversy, not a little controversy. I think we dealt with that. I mentioned earlier a letter that I received. This letter said, "You are one of the greatest despoilers of nature that we have ever had, hundreds of miles of streams are being destroyed in my state." The total in

wetlands obviously you may be getting involved in pothole country and on that basis there has always been a considerable amount of controversy relative to destroying habitat for ducks and the like. At the same time, some of these groups that are so concerned about that almost totally overlook the fact that we created a couple of a million farm ponds, a high percentage of which are also duck habitat. These are the things that you have to try to bring together. The historical drainage that we've done, like in northern Indiana, on flat agricultural land or land that you need to put tile systems in, I don't think has ever been very controversial. It's only when you begin to get into

immemorial. Now, I did a little thing one time in one state where we had a group that was promoting the never recover theory entirely, and instead of having a before and after picture, we had an after picture and a before picture. I showed a beautiful stream with banks stabilized and clear water--just a picture perfect natural stream. And then I showed a picture of that stream with a steam shovel right down the middle of it. This, incidentally, was not done by the Service. Torn it all to pieces, spoiled banks laying out on the side, and everybody gasped, "What a destruction of a beautiful stream!" I said, "That's very, very true, the only thing I want to point out is that this is the before picture that was done years ago by a private group, and this is the way the stream looks today." Nobody could believe it. For streams that are completely clogged up with no outlet at all, if people want to keep it in that situation forever, there's no way you can accommodate them if you are going to provide drainage for watershed projects. The only answer to that one, really, gets down to "Are the benefits sufficient to justify going ahead with the downstream work, or are the wildlife benefits and others so unique and so beneficial that you can't do it?" If that's the case, maybe you can't do anything in there. And that's the decision you have got to reach. Now that's, I think, the unusual case. I am really totally convinced that in most cases we could develop a program that would accommodate the needs and desires of most of the people and reach agreement and proceed. Sometimes, after long delays and sometimes at a much greater cost, but nevertheless it could be done.

HELMS: If you are looking at a multiple purpose project, often it is going to be more expensive than simply protecting agricultural land.

GRANT: That's right.

HELMS: Mr. Grant, I want to ask you a question that relates to what the philosophy and the work of the SCS should be. If you look at a little bit of the recent history, you will see trends in the 1960s where we have concern with rural development, work on the urban fringe, and helping small towns and small communities with their resource problems. Then we'll have other groups, maybe some of the agricultural groups, saying our work should be strictly agriculture. We have things like the Resource Conservation Act (RCA) process that says soil erosion is a bad thing and we need to target these scarce personnel and resources to that. Other groups say identifying prime farmlands to try to influence their use is not the proper role of a federal agency. You've seen this throughout your career. What was your opinion during your time as administrator and now?

GRANT: Well, some of the things that you related are becoming even more in focus now than they were at the time I was there. However, the beginnings of most of these things

were in place during the time I was administrator. I found that we had little problem in less agricultural states meeting some of the resource needs of

directors of the national association at one time because there was so much discussion taking place as to what percentage of our time was being

In my judgment, the Soil Conservation Act and the Soil Conservation Service were supposed to take those actions with the farmers, ranchers, landowners, and users of land in such a way that the greatest good for the greatest number of people was effected. Land use problems outside of the farm and ranch were never outside of our province. We were working in soil conservation districts. All of the land within that district was land on which we could develop plans and provide basic information through agreements with districts. A person that owns five thousand acres of timberland and maybe is the controlling interest in a whole watershed that feeds town water supplies is deserving of attention if he needs information about the soils and how to manage them. So is the farmer or rancher who has a serious problem with agricultural waste management and in times of heavy runoff his overflow is going into streams that go down into towns that can affect water supplies. We had those problems and we had to contend with them. I tried to write policy guidelines in such a way that SCS people with the district supervisors would cooperatively make decisions as to where the highest priorities were. Some districts were quite different than others. That's not bad because the ultimate decision maker is whoever owns the land or controls the land and determines what's going to be done with it. I heard Dr. Kellogg say one time in one of the metropolitan areas that he'd just been in that he saw more soil erosion as a result of road construction than there ever was from agricultural land in that area. Well, if that's true, it seems important that we supply the information necessary to try to correct that problem.

HELMS: What pleases you most and what were the strong points of your administration? To end, tell us your reflections on spending your career in the Soil Conservation Service.

GRANT: Well, my reflections on a career in soil conservation are all on the positive side. If I had my life to live over again, I would certainly not hesitate in the slightest to repeat the career that I had. Some things have happened now which I am not enthusiastic about. Since I made it a public statement at the 50th Anniversary of the Service, I guess it's no secret that I feel rather strongly that the Service has career people who are eminently well qualified in the field of soil conservation as administrators, and would have liked to see the agency remain headed by career professionals. That hasn't happened and I'm not saying that as a result of it the Service can't continue to do the job it had, it's just that my personal feelings--which are what I am expressing now--are simply that I would have preferred that the Service be headed up in a different manner. That is no expression of personal animosity toward any of the political appointees. I told one of them when he was appointed that I would do anything in the world that I could do

to help him, but he might just as well know that if I had had my choice of how we selected administrators, he would have never had the job. He replied, "I appreciate that and understand it fully."

I worked rather hard for quite a long time to get the Service out of "Schedule C." Finally, just before I

program. I moved my daughter when she was a senior. I think, and both of them agree, that while temporarily there's a little impact from it, it was favorable to them in the long run because they went into a new environment. Particularly my daughter, who was going on to college, felt that a year in a large metropolitan area school, which happened to be

remember are selecting certain people in New Hampshire and certain people in Indiana and certain people that I ran into in the field as I traveled around the country, offering them the opportunity to advance their career in positions of greater responsibility, and seeing them be successful. Even today, when people are being appointed to some job in a state, I had frequently recognized the talents of that individual back when he was a district conservationist. So did others, I'm not unique in that. At one time we had in the career system a program where every state conservationist was supposed to submit to the Washington office three names each year of people he thought the Service should watch over a period of time because they had great potential to advance in the Service. It's remarkable how many times those decisions turned out to be good ones. So the career system is something that I fought for, and I tried to develop that attitude in the employees of the Service. One of the things that I have been probably as proud of as anything in the Service is what we did do in career development

agriculture field. Some of these people have served ten, twenty, or thirty years. I've seen them show up at meetings in snowstorms and drive fifty miles to sit in a meeting till eleven o'clock and then drive home and have to get up and milk cows in the morning, or go on to some other activity. I have the greatest admiration for them. I think we developed with the presidents of the NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts), when I was administrator, a real spirit of cooperation between SCS, SCDs (Soil Conservation Districts), and other local organizations that were involved in the total conservation efforts. Some people criticized this a little bit, I suspect because they got the opinion that it was almost one, that SCS and SCD was just the same thing. The difference between the responsibilities of the districts and the national association, and the Soil Conservation Service and its national office is very pronounced. Their hopes and aspirations may be tied to the same star in the sky, but the road they travel to get there is quite different. And I

Now, I guess somebody who starts in the field, working with farmers and ranchers, is always going to say that that's the time you felt like every day you had an opportunity to make a

decisions but at the same time you are within the guidelines that are being laid down by the Department and OMB. Sometimes you have the problem of explaining and justifying

deeply involved in the discussions throughout the whole hearing, which anybody can find out by reading the congressional hearings.

I enjoyed the years that I was administrator. I enjoyed the overseas assignments and I enjoyed the opportunity every year to occasionally get back into the field with field

contribute to the program after retiring has been pretty slim.

One state conservationist once said that they ought to call the period that I was administrator the "environmental period." Even though depositions with lawyers and things of that nature are not necessarily the things that you like to go through every day, nor are

certainly as much reason to be concerned about the environmental problems as anybody does. I think the interests of the owners and the users and managers of the land, and the environmental concerns of other groups are such that they are natural groups to work together if they are ever going to solve some of the problems that they face. You know, the pothole country is one example. Farmers and ranchers own much of that land, but many other groups have very real concerns about what takes place. It's much better if we can work out a series of policies and actions that allow these groups to participate in the challenges. I'm sure the program will take new directions, but the need for dedicated men and women will always remain.

[redacted]

R. M. (Mel) Davis

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